

The President's Daily Brief

25 October 1969

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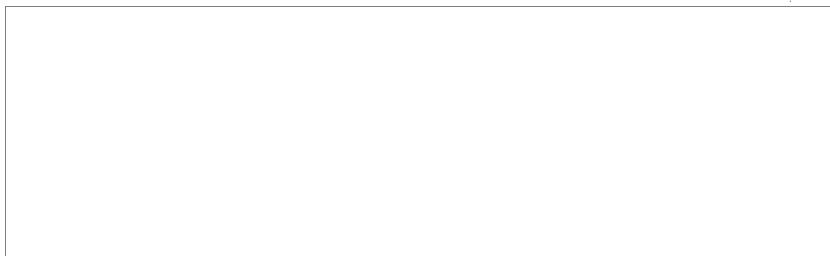
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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS



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The political atmosphere in Libya, and its implications for US interests there, are commented on [redacted]
[redacted] (Page 4)

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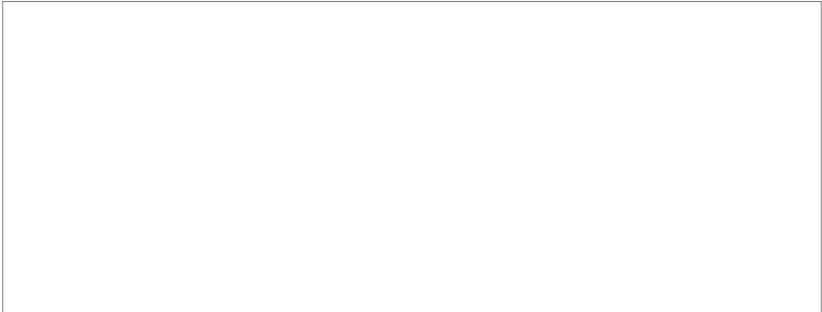
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The Chinese have resumed road construction in northwest Laos, both for support of antigovernment forces there and possible future aid to insurgents in Thailand. (Page 5)

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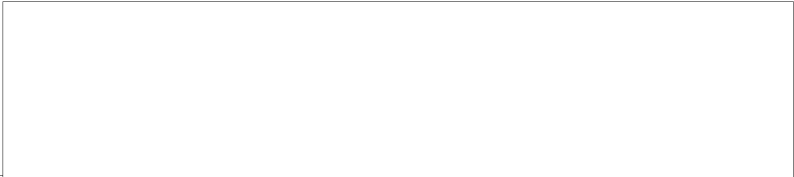
VIETNAM



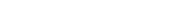
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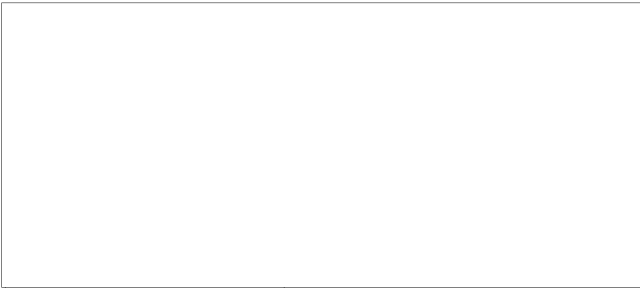
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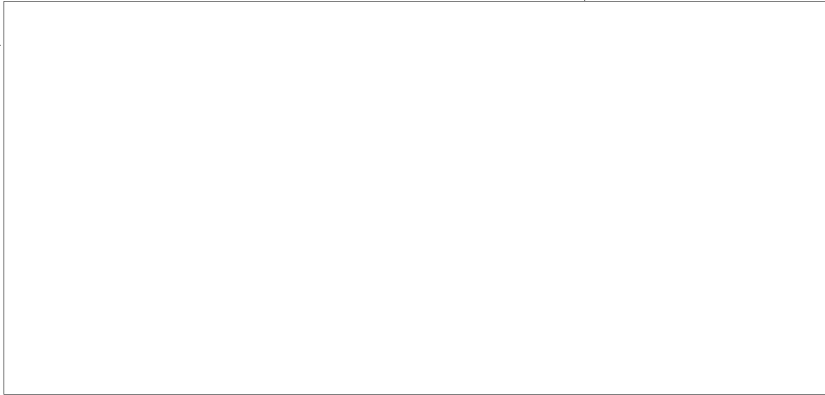
President Thieu's six-party political front has been weakened even further by the withdrawal of one of its members. The leader of the Social Democratic Party said yesterday that his party was leaving the National Social Democratic Front because it served no useful purpose in national politics and was not involved "in any significant activity."

The Social Democrats are one of the smallest groups in the Front, but their support comes from the Hoa Hao religious sect, making them the one truly southern-oriented party in the Front.

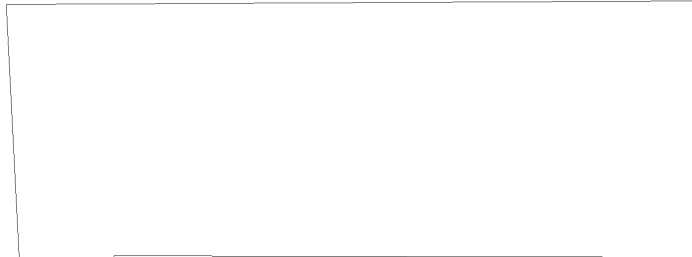
Although Thieu has never looked to the Front to provide the main base of his support, in the past few weeks he has met twice with the parties' leaders in an effort to prod them into grassroots activity. By giving more personal attention to the Front, Thieu may be able to keep it together, but it is increasingly unlikely that it will become a real political force.

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USSR-CHINA



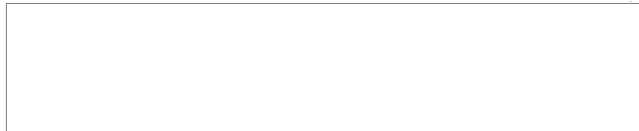
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LIBYA

We have earlier noted the apparent intent of the new government to move toward the closing of the US base at Wheelus field. The path down which the youthful junta is taking the country has disturbing implications for other US interests in Libya as well.

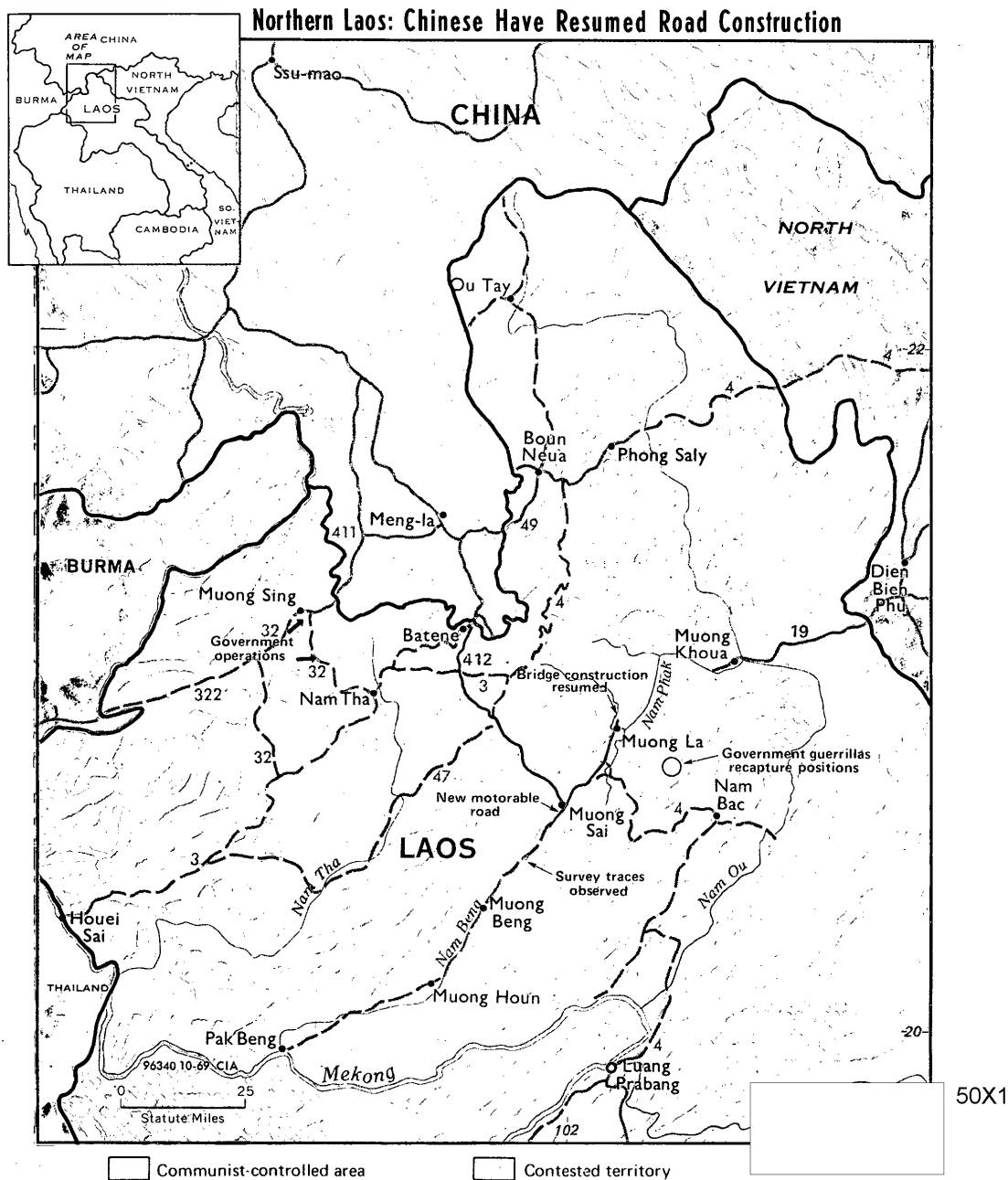
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--There is a marked trend toward an anti-US attitude on the part of the military regime. The US in particular is being portrayed by the controlled news media as an enemy of the Arab people, and of Libya specifically. Wheelus Air Base is pictured as a colonialist vestige of the overthrown monarchy, and the American Embassy as a sanctuary of pro-Israeli elements.

--Another recurring press theme is the "security threat" to Libya and the Arab world posed by the US. American policies are viewed as deliberately calculated to deprive the Arabs of their rights in the area. This campaign probably is intended to isolate the American community by convincing Libyans they should shun American contacts.

--The deteriorating political atmosphere, plus the growing inability to import supplies and control operations, has resulted in significant changes in oil company planning. Some firms apparently are sharply reducing planned investments. Other US commercial interests are similarly feeling the pinch.

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LAOS

Recent aerial photography confirms that the Chinese have resumed road construction in the northwest. The most significant new activity is concentrated southwest of the Communist headquarters at Muong Sai. Five miles of newly motorable road can now be seen, along with the construction of automatic weapons and air defense positions. In addition, survey traces have been observed roughly two-thirds of the way from Muong Sai to Pak Beng.

Northeast of Muong Sai, construction has resumed on a major bridge near Muong La, suggesting that the Chinese intend to link up their new road with Route 19 at Muong Khoua. The completion of this portion of the road system will strengthen Communist capabilities for supporting Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces currently operating in the northwest.

The new road work is the clearest sign to date of long-range Communist interest in challenging areas of government control in the northwest. Communist interest in this area was demonstrated last April when Pathet Lao forces overran a number of government positions near Pak Beng, the only government outpost of any consequence between the Mekong River and Muong Sai.

Ultimate extension of this road to Pak Beng, which seems a logical development, would also facilitate whatever plans the Chinese may have for support of insurgents in northern Thailand. In any event, the recent progress of this road is certain to cause uneasiness in Bangkok. - and Vietnam

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NOTES

Lebanon: Yesterday's most serious incidents occurred in the city of Tripoli in northern Lebanon, where demonstrators defied the curfew and clashed with police. Earlier in the day, Syrians--possibly military personnel--attacked a border post north of Tripoli but were driven back by Lebanese forces. In Beirut, Michel Khoury, a confidant of President Hilu, has told US Embassy officials that Hilu is attempting to form a small cabinet that he hopes will be representative of the principal political elements in the country. Khoury also indicated that the government is in contact with fedayeen leaders in both Lebanon and Jordan.

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Southern Yemen: US Embassy personnel, preparing to leave Aden following yesterday's abrupt severance of relations, are encountering serious obstacles. Armed guards are severely restricting their movement, other foreign diplomats have been prevented from lending assistance in packing personal belongings, and there is an indication that the radical regime may insist on use of a local airline for the departure flight, rather than a chartered Ethiopian aircraft as planned.

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